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SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR A/S SHANNON FROM CHARLES SHAPIRO; NSC FOR  
RESTREPO; STATE PLEASE PASS TO USTR FOR EISSENSTAT; STATE  
ALSO FOR WHA/CAR, WHA/CCA AND USOAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/21/2019  
TAGS: PREL PGOV ETRD ECON KSUM TD  
SUBJECT: MANNING HIGH ON OBAMA, WANTS TO DEEPEN  
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S.

Classified By: Charge Charles Shapiro

¶1. (C) I met with Prime Minister Patrick Manning the morning of April 21 to discuss the Summit and to take my leave of him. Also participating were the PM's Special Assistant Kirt St. Bernard and two aides; DCM Kusnitz was with me. I thanked Manning, on behalf of the President, for hosting a successful Summit and for putting up with all of our requests as we prepared the President's participation in the event. Upbeat and relaxed, Manning responded by noting his great pleasure that President Obama had come to T&T so early in his term. The President had been "a big hit here." Manning's only regret was that the President Obama did not interact more with Trinidad's people. He related that when things bogged down at the Retreat over the Summit Declaration, the President offered a solution and all the others followed.

¶2. (C) The PM then turned to Cuba, noting there will be a move at the June OASGA to overturn the 1962 resolution suspending Cuba's membership. The U.S. needs to get in front of this wave, Manning advised. I observed the Cubans have said they are not overly interested in the OAS, Manning responded that "they can be talked into it ... Havana just doesn't want to appear too anxious." Manning urged the President to meet with Raul Castro. While the OAS can make it possible to resume full membership, the U.S. and Cuba should work out their differences directly. I suggested that T&T should use its influence to encourage Cuba to make positive moves in response to the substantial changes the President has made to Cuba policy. He reiterated: "Just talk to Raul and the rest is history."

¶3. (C) Recognizing Trinidad's natural leadership in CARICOM, I asked what we could do to work closer with Trinidad and CARICOM in the UN and the OAS. I stressed that we want to build on what we have achieved in working together to assure a successful Summit. Manning agreed, but said he was still "peeved" at the Bush Administration for what he perceived as a lack of attention/respect. We "gave the U.S. energy security and got nothing" in return. He stressed that Trinidad is a stable supplier and as the U.S. seeks to diversify its LNG sources to places like Qatar, it needs to keep that in mind.

¶4. (C) Manning underscored Eastern Caribbean (OECS) regional integration remains a priority for him. The neighboring countries are small and their economies challenged; Trinidad will do what it can to assist them. Along these lines, Manning said he has a "dispensation" from CARICOM to seek a bilateral "partial scope agreement" on energy with the United States. He mentioned this goal to the President and USTR Kirk and said it would include polypropylene and aluminum and T&T

could involve its regional partners in the supply chain.

Comment: Aglow

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¶5. (C) Manning was relaxed, jovial and clearly pleased with the way the Summit turned out and with the President's visit. He continues to see himself as a potential player in bringing the U.S. and Cuba together and as the wealthy relative looking out for the interest of the poorer Eastern Caribbean states. Manning is aglow now, but his past penchant for feeling slighted -- and that his country is being ignored -- will manifest itself in the future absent some attention from Washington. It is worth the effort to build on Manning's (new found) positive views about the United States and especially about the President. Manning has the ability to bring many of CARICOM's 14 votes along with him at the UN and OAS.

SHAPIRO